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Regional Development Guide

\$80 million schools project underway in Fairfield

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Big changes are underway in Fairfield City Schools as the district embarks on an \$80 million project that will create three new academic buildings as part of a restructuring effort.

The district broke ground Oct. 15 on the new buildings – including two 90,000-square-foot elementary schools and a new 145,000-square-foot freshman school. SHP Leading Design is the architect for all three structures, and Skanska USA Building and Megan Construction Co. have paired up to build them.



COURTESY OF FAIRFIELD CITY SCHOOLS

This rendering of the new Fairfield freshman school shows the two-story main entry to the office, media center and cafeteria.

Funding for the project received a kickstart with a \$19 million grant from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission. Fairfield raised the remaining money through a \$61 million bond issue, which passed in May 2014 after a narrow defeat the prior fall.

Two of the structures will replace the existing Central Elementary and freshman school. The third building, on Holden Boulevard, will add a sixth elementary school to the district. Students, residents and non-residents alike were

school to the district. Students, residents and non-residents alike were encouraged to vote on a name for the new school. The choice was to be announced this month.

The projects are part of Fairfield's strategic master plan to update or replace aging facilities, said School and Community Relations Director Gina Gentry-Fletcher.

"The layout of the (current) buildings is not conducive to a positive learning environment," Gentry-Fletcher said.

The new schools will also help facilitate a districtwide restructuring effort. Currently, all Fairfield students transition through five different buildings on the journey from first through 12th grades. Starting in 2017 when the buildings are complete, they'll move through just four.

Fairfield saved a significant amount of money on the construction projects, Gentry-Fletcher said, by locating the sixth elementary school on land the district already owned and the freshman school on the same property as the high school. That savings allowed district officials to tackle renovations at Fairfield's high school stadium as well.

The new schools will also be energy efficient, said SHP Project Manager Jeff Parker.

"We're targeting a LEED Silver certification, which means they'll be very affordable to operate," Parker said. "They feature geothermal heating and cooling systems and a lot of natural daylighting in the classrooms with windows that are super-insulated. We're (also) trying to minimize water usage with low-flow fixtures and automatic fixtures."

Parker described two-story common areas that serve as the "social heart of the building," incorporating media center space and amphitheater-style seating for everyday lunches or special events.

There will also be large collaborative spaces that open onto clusters of classrooms, "so they can do team teaching (and) large group things more

easily.”

Parker said the design is intended to help prepare students for the future. “To meet that demand, they need to learn differently - less of the industrialized approach and more of a collaborative, 21st-century approach.”